Managing Emergencies at Los Alamos

The mission of the Los Alamos National Laboratory Emergency Operations Office is to ensure prompt, professional response to all laboratory emergency situations that will protect the laboratory's employees, property and mission as well as ensure the safety of surrounding communities.

Los Alamos National Laboratory's emergency management process is designed to ensure that emergencies are mitigated in the most effective manner and that proper protection is afforded to laboratory employees, contractors, the public and the environment. The Emergency Management Plan allows the laboratory to plan for, respond to and mitigate the potential consequences of an emergency. This plan, coupled with the building emergency planning program and site-specific emergency procedures, presents the requirements, procedures and information needed to ensure that any emergency experienced at the laboratory is mitigated in the most expeditious and effective manner.

During emergency situations, the Emergency Management and Response Group will exercise the command and control of emergency response elements through the incident commander on scene and the emergency director in the Emergency Operations Center (if activated); these individuals are in charge of resolving emergencies that occur on DOE property. This authority includes the utilization of any laboratory resource necessary for the mitigation of an emergency.

Laboratory line management is required to plan for emergencies; provide the necessary emergency training to ensure that employees, the public and the environment are protected; and take the emergency actions necessary to mitigate any incident that may occur until relieved by authorized personnel. The laboratory's Emergency Management Plan is designed to be compatible with emergency plans developed by local, state, tribal and federal agencies by establishing communications channels with these agencies and by setting criteria for notifying each agency when warranted by an emergency. The laboratory encourages employees to assess and report occurrences to ensure that management is kept informed of events that may:

- Affect or endanger the health and safety of employees or the public;
- Seriously impact the intended purpose of the laboratory's facilities or programs; or
- Have a significant adverse effect on the environment.

Extensive training in real-world conditions ensures that laboratory emergency response teams are prepared for any eventuality.

Emergency Event Classification

Operational Emergencies. Operational Emergencies are unplanned, significant events or conditions that require time-urgent response from outside the immediate area of the incident. The Public Affairs Office will issue information the public needs to know to protect its health and safety in an operational emergency.

Incidents that can be controlled by employees or maintenance personnel in the immediate/affected site/facility or area are not Operational Emergencies. Incidents that do not pose a significant hazard to safety, health, and/or the environment and that do not require a time-urgent response are not Operational Emergencies.

Events that involve the release of hazardous materials require further classification. The three classes of hazardous material operational emergencies, in order of increasing severity, are defined as:

Alert. An "Alert" is an incident that represents a substantial actual or potential degradation in the level of safety. The incident may have created or could lead to a release to the environment of radioactive or other hazardous material. Such a release is not expected to affect the public or require protective actions.

Site Area Emergency. A "Site Area Emergency" is an incident that has created actual or potential major failures of systems or functions needed for protection of workers, the public or the environment. Such an emergency could result in releases beyond the facility boundary that exceed the Department of Energy's protective action criteria for radiological releases or emergency response guidelines for toxic materials release. However, the release is not expected to travel beyond the institutional boundary and therefore is not expected to directly affect the general public.

General Emergency. A "General Emergency" is an event or condition with actual or imminent catastrophic reduction of safety systems with the potential or actual loss of hazardous material in sufficient quantity to exceed protective action criteria beyond the boundaries of the laboratory. For such conditions, it is necessary to mobilize available onsite and off-site resources to deal with the event and its consequences.

Public Information

The Department of Energy's *Los Alamos Site Office/Los Alamos National Laboratory Emergency Public Information Plan* provides a framework for coordinated, accurate and timely release of information to laboratory employees, news media, the public and other stakeholders.

Procedures are in place to ensure the release of accurate information to employees and the news media and to other state and local organizations, and for the coordination of this information with the Department of Energy. Community and tribal leaders; offices of local, state and federal elected officials, the general public and special interest groups will have an interest in any emergency situation at the laboratory and may need to be advised to undertake protective actions. The laboratory's Community Relations and Government Relations office leaders and designated staff from their respective offices will communicate, normally by E-mail and telephone, with these audiences using approved information from the Emergency Operations Center.

The laboratory's Hazardous Materials team provides training opportunities for similar teams throughout the region.

Public Inquiries

The Community Relations Office is responsible for establishing and managing the rumor control line for the public in the event of an emergency; the public can call this number (665-4400 or 1-888-841-8256) for additional help or information. Members of the Community Relations staff will answer questions with approved information or will research an answer, as needed, through the Emergency Operations Center.

When a Joint Information Center is activated to provide coordinated information response from the laboratory as well as from local or state agencies, Community Relations will transfer its public response staff to that location and will forward the rumor control line to the JIC telephone number: 505-606-0169.

The Community Alert Network, as well as a radio link with KRSN radio, and the ability to enlist the local cable television network enable the laboratory to notify Los Alamos County and surrounding area residents in a timely manner. These functions are coordinated through the Emergency Management and Response Group.

News Media

An initial news release will be made as soon as possible and may be issued either verbally or in written format once information verification and approval has been completed. The laboratory will adhere to the standards of other federal agencies and private industry by releasing information within one hour of the event, if at all possible.

Operational requirements associated with some emergencies may dictate a delay in issuing a news release — for example, in a hostage situation it may not be desirable to initiate an immediate notification to media because such notification may compromise security and response activities in progress. The laboratory will issue a statement to the news media in as prompt a fashion as possible given the circumstances of the individual incident. Subsequent releases will be prepared and distributed as soon as additional information is available. News releases will have the time and date recorded on them and will be numbered for easy reference.

The emergency public information staff will be accessible, prompt, courteous and forthcoming in dealing with the media prior to, during and after emergency events. Credibility is imperative, and every effort will be made to promote a positive media interface. The only information withheld will be that considered classified, confidential/proprietary or of potential damage to national security; in addition, as noted above, information release may be delayed if it will jeopardize security and response activities in progress. When public and/or personnel health and safety are in jeopardy, the emergency

will be addressed immediately and candidly.

When a Joint Information Center is activated to provide coordinated information response from the laboratory as well as local or state agencies, Public Affairs will transfer its media response staff to that location and will provide the JIC telephone number: 505-606-0169, through a news release announcing the center's activation.

Employees

Employee communications during and after an emergency are essential. Employees need to know appropriate response actions to take during an emergency. Providing timely and accurate information to employees helps limit the spread of rumors, maintains calm behavior and facilitates the effective management of the emergency event. Providing protective action information to off-site employees also is important because it will let them know if and when it is safe for them to report to work.

The Communications and External Relations Division's Public Affairs Office coordinates distribution of approved information to employees about any emergency, including protective action instructions, through a variety of communications channels:

- Managers receive information and updates through E-mail, which they are instructed to share with employees in their organizations.
- Alphanumeric pager network for the deaf employees
- The Public Affairs Office also has authority to send all-employee E-mails, and uses that avenue when the situation requires reaching as many employees as possible as quickly as possible.
- The online Daily Newsbulletin posts information as it is received to http://www.lanl.gov/orgs/pa/newsbulletin.
- An Update telephone line (505-667-6622 or toll-free 877-723-4101) provides site status reports.
- Employees can make specific inquiries about the emergency by contacting the Public Affairs Office at 505-667-7000
- The Site Wide Area Notification System and the laboratory's trunked radio system are also sources of information

There is also an emergency Web page (http://www.lanl.gov/emergency), which will be activated only in times of emergency response; informational updates specific to the emergency situation will be posted to the site. In addition, various types of background information can be linked from this Web site.

Notifications

Laboratory employees and the surrounding community can be notified using one or more of the following methods/systems:

- Local UHF and VHF radio networks
- The Laboratory's Emergency Web site
- Laboratory Newsbulletin and Bulletin Board (Web-based)
- Update—Telephone recording with telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) capability
- Electronic mail
- Facsimile machine systems
- Sounding the appropriate facility alarm
- Laboratory telephone system
- Community Alert Network
- Satellite telephones
- Local news media:

Radio Stations
KRSN AM1490 (Los Alamos)
KKOB AM 770 (Albuquerque)
KBOM FM 106.7 (Albuquerque)
KDCE AM 950 (Española)
KTAO FM 101.9 (Taos)
KSWV AM 810 (Santa Fe)

The Associated Press

Television stations:
KOAT-TV (ABC)
http://www.thenewmexicochannel.com
KOB-TV (NBC)
http://www.kobtv.com/
KRQE-TV (CBS)
http://www.krqe.com/
Local cable TV channel PAC-8 (Public)
http://www.losalamos.com/pac8/generalinfo.asp

Usesful Web links

Department of Homeland Security's emergency preparedness guide.

The Los Alamos County shelter in place page.

"How to Shelter In Place in an Emergency" from the American Red Cross.

Useful telephone numbers

- Los Alamos National Laboratory public rumor control line (Community Relations Office): 665-4400 or 1-888-841-8256
- News media inquiries (Public Affairs Office): 505-667-7000
- Joint Information Center (when established in an emergency): 505-606-0169
- Los Alamos employee Update line: 505-667-6622 or toll-free 877-723-4101

Los Alamos National Laboratory is operated by the University of California for the
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Public Affairs Office 505-667-7000
www.lanl.gov/emergency